Decreasing attraction among youth to join Armed Forces

† 3026. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the attraction towards Indian Armed Forces is decreasing among the youth; if so, the main reasons for the same;

(b) whether Government are aware of the fact that 263 pilots of Indian Air Force have joined private airlines after taking premature retirement during the last three years; if so, the main reasons for the same; and

(c) whether Government are also aware of the fact that around ten thousand posts at officer level i.e., from Captain to Major are vacant in the Air Force and Army; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) With economic progress and opening up of new avenues of employment, there are other options available to the youth, other than employment in the armed forces;

(b) 236 pilots of the Indian Air Force have proceeded on premature retirement in the last three years. The main reasons are supersession, low medical fitness or compelling personal reasons. Information about these pilots joining private airlines is not available with the Government.

(c) Deficiency in officers cadre in the rank of Lt. Colonel and below in the Army is 10650. There is an overall shortage of 508 officers in the Indian Air Force. In the Navy, there is a shortage of 1244 officers.

Illusory news regarding sinking of INS Khukri

† 3027. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that illusory news have been published in some newspapers regarding sinking of INS Khukri at the time of Indo-Pak war while at the time of sinking of the ship, Ex-Chief S.W.A. Shri Chanchal Singh, who was present on the ship, had written a detailed letter to the Minister as per which the facts were quite different and he had requested him to make explicit the facts;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that some Members of Parliament have also drawn the attention of the Minister in this regard; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, the action that have been taken by the Ministry in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) In September, 2004, Shri Chanchal Singh, Ex-Chief Ship Wright Artificer (SWA) wrote a letter stating that news reports published in some newspapers/magazines regarding sinking of INS, Khukri were partially incorrect which needed to be corrected. The essence of his letter was that when INS, Khukri sank due to torpedo hit by an enemy submarine, INS Kirpan (which was deployed with INS, Khukri at that time) left the scene, without caring for the survivors of INS, Khukri. Shri Chanchal Singh saved many of the drowning sailors of INS, Khukri, for which he should have been given a Gallantry award.

The Gallantry and other awards are given on merit and cannot be claimed as a matter of right. Regarding the incident of sinking of INS, Khukri, deeds of all the Naval personnel on board were duly evaluated by the Naval authorities. Shri Chanchal Singh's dedication to duty and courage on board INS, Khukri was also considered and he was given a one time cash award of Rs. 50,000. He was, however, not found deserving for a Gallantry award.

Some Members of Parliament had also written to the Government in this regard and their letters have also been replied to.

Pull out of troops from Siachen

3028. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government, following the recent visit of Prime Minister to Siachen, have decided to pull out troops from Siachen Glacier to convert into a "mountain of peace"; and

(b) if so, what assurance or guarantee has been secured to ensure that Pakistan would ensure *status-quo* would not intrude into and reoccupy the Siachen heights?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) A ceasefire has been in force on Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Siachen area since the midnight of 25th November, 2003. There is no proposal at present to pull out troops from Siachen Glacier.